

METHOD FOR DETECTING PIEZOELECTRIC ELEMENT FAILURES IN HEAD SUSPENSIONS

Cross Reference to Related Application

This application is a division of Application No. 09/941,477 filed August 29, 2001, which claims the benefit of US Provisional Application No. 60/230,029, filed September 5, 2000. The entire contents of Application Nos. 09/941,477 and 60/230,029 are hereby incorporated by reference.

Background of the Invention

Microactuated suspensions are generally known and disclosed, for example, in the Krinke et al. U.S. Patent 6,046,888. Figure 1 is an illustration of one such microactuated suspension 30. The embodiment shown in Figure 1 has an actuator or motor 32 formed by a pair of piezoelectric (PZT) elements 34, 36 for rotating or otherwise driving a load beam 38 with respect to a baseplate 40 in response to electric drive signals. Piezoelectric materials are also widely used as transducers of mechanical motion into electrical energy.

The piezoelectric elements are typically mounted to the suspension by adhesive. Adhesive fractures sometimes develop during the manufacturing process. As a result of these fractures, the piezoelectric elements are not properly mounted to the suspension, and will not function properly. Fractures are also sometimes present in the piezoelectric elements themselves, and can also prevent the microactuator from functioning properly. Still other microactuator failures occur when the piezoelectric elements are depoled, when the elements are oriented or electrically interconnected with the same polarity, and when the bonds between the drive signal lead wires and the element terminals are broken.

Known testing approaches for identifying motor failures include resistance and stroke tests. There remains, however, a continuing need for improved motor failure test methods and associated systems. Methods and systems which are capable of being efficiently performed and which can accurately identify a wide range of failures would be particularly desirable.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a simplified plan view of a head suspension having microactuator motors to which the present invention is directed.

Figure 2 is a schematic illustration of a microactuated suspension, together with a motor failure detection system according to the present invention.

Figure 3a is an output waveform of a good part.

Figure 3b is a graph of electrical signals produced by a properly functioning and mounted microactuator motor and a motor having an adhesive fracture.

Figure 3c is an output waveform of a part with the wire disconnected between the motors.

Figure 4 shows the output waveforms for a suspension with a right and a left motor fracture.

Figure 5 shows the output waveform for a suspension that has a broken wire bond between the motors.

Figure 6 shows the output waveform when both motors are depoled.

Figure 7 is a histogram of good parts and parts with a cracked left motor.

Figure 8a is a graph in the form of a histogram of signal characteristics of microactuator suspension failure tests for properly functioning suspensions and for suspensions having different failure modes.

Figure 8b is a key for Figures 8c-8e.

Figure 8c shows a section view along line A-A of Figure 8b with a wire 98 for a normal part.

Figure 8d shows a section view along line A-A of Figure 8b for motors poled the same.

Figure 8e shows a section view along line A-A of Figure 8b for motors with a broken wire bond.

Figure 9 is a graph in the form of a histogram of signal characteristics of microactuator suspension failure tests for properly functioning suspensions and for suspensions having fractures in one of the piezoelectric elements.

Figure 10 is a histogram of good parts and parts with various other defects.

Figure 11 is a graph of signal levels from a series of tested components, some of which are properly functioning, and some of which have fractures in either a left or a right piezoelectric element.

Figure 12 is a graph of signal levels from a series of tested components, some of which are properly functioning, and some of which have fractures in both piezoelectric elements.

Figure 13 is a graph of electrical signals produced by a properly functioning and mounted microactuator motor and a suspension motor having failure modes in both piezoelectric elements.

Figure 14 is a photograph of the piezoelectric elements of a suspension microactuator motor having a microcrack (not visible) before application of a sweep frequency signal in accordance with a certain aspect of the present invention.

Figure 15 is a photograph of the motor of Figure 9 after application of a crack-expanding sweep frequency signal.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

The present invention is based upon the recognition that a wide range of microactuator failure modes can be efficiently detected by causing relative movement between the suspension portions being driven with respect to one another by the motor 32, and monitoring and evaluating the electrical signals produced by the motor. The characteristics of the electrical signals (e.g., shapes and levels) produced by a motor having a failure mode are sufficiently different than those of a properly functioning motor that the operational state can be accurately assessed.

The suspension design shown in Figures 1 and 2 includes two PZT elements 34, 36 that act as the motor 32 and provide fine adjustment of a read/write head 37. It is to be understood that the motor region 32 is the area on the suspension where the PZT elements 34, 36 are bonded. Damage to the motor region causes changes in the suspension's structural characteristics. An electrical charge is created by applying stress to the PZT elements 34, 36.

The method of the present invention, referred to as the “ringout” method, applies stress to the motor region 32 containing the PZT elements 34, 36 and monitors the resultant voltage across nodes 42, 44. If the motor region 32 has a defect, the output voltage changes depending on the failure mode. In the design shown in Figures 1 and 2, the PZT elements 34, 36 carry a small percentage of the suspension gram load.

Ringout is a test method that may be used to detect motor structure damage such as adhesive delamination, broken wire bonds, depoled motors and some types of PZT fractures. One such type of fracture is a “hairline crack” i.e., a crack that permeates the top gold layer of a PZT element and can be enlarged by subjecting the top gold layer to a tensile stress. In contrast, as used herein, it is to be understood that a “microcrack” is a crack that does not permeate the top gold layer of the PZT element and cannot be observed by eye or microscope at any magnification even if the PZT element is stressed.

Figure 2 is a schematic illustration of a microactuated suspension and a “ringout” motor failure detection system in accordance with the present invention. As shown, the motor failure detection system generally includes a clamp 46, a motion actuator 48 and a signal processing system 50. The suspension baseplate is clamped to a datum or fixed location by the clamp 46. The motion actuator 48 engages a headlift (not shown) or other component of the load beam 38 or flexure 39 and raises or lowers (e.g., moves) the load beam 38 with respect to the baseplate 40 (within its range of elastic deformation). The motion actuator 48 then releases the load beam 38 or flexure 39, thereby allowing the load beam to vibrate in a periodic manner at its natural frequency. The clamp 46 and motion actuator 48 of this embodiment of the invention thereby cooperate to cause relative movement between the suspension portions that are being driven with respect to one another by the piezoelectric elements 34, 36 of the motor 32.

Referring to Figures 3a and 3b, as well as to Figure 2, the electrical signal(s) produced by the motor in response to the movement on lines 42, 44 are monitored and evaluated by the signal processing system 50 to provide information representative of motor failure modes. Another embodiment of the invention (not shown) includes a motion actuator which engages a headlift on the suspension, and raises the suspension to its fly height before releasing the

suspension and allowing the suspension to vibrate. The ringout method of the present invention takes advantage of this condition by applying stress to the PZT elements 34, 36 by lifting the part to flyheight while holding the base plate 40 stationary using a clamp 46. The part is then released, and the suspension 30 is allowed to freely resonate about its bending mode. The suspension design shown has the two PZT elements or motors 34, 36 connected in parallel. The voltage 52 measured at the trace is the sum of the voltages from the individual motors. Since the motors are poled in opposite directions, bending stresses will produce opposite charges on each motor. This electro-mechanical relationship is illustrated in Figure 3c by disconnecting the wire between the two motors and displaying the output waveforms 54, 56 from each simultaneously as the part is tested. In this example, the peak voltage 58 from the right motor is approximately -5.7 v, compared to +4.9 v for the left motor peak voltage 60, as shown in Figure 3c. The differing peak voltages are due to the fact that more stress is applied to the right motor because of the asymmetrical characteristics of the design, which is caused by the flexure being attached to one side of the suspension as opposed to being attached to the center of the part. When the load beam 38 is lifted to flyheight, stress is applied to both motors. A motor region failure mode, such as a cracked PZT motor or adhesive delamination, will change the applied stress in relation to the size and location of the fracture. The change in stress causes a proportional change in peak output voltage, which indicates the part is defective.

Returning to Figures 3a and 3b, the voltage waveform 52 of the PZT elements during a ringout test of a good part may be seen at two magnification levels. The first peak voltage 62 is used to determine if a defect exists; however, the entire waveform 52 provides additional information about the failure mode and may be used for that purpose. Note that the fundamental frequency for a good suspension (of the type shown) at free state is approximately 315 Hz in Figure 3a and the first peak voltage measures -0.8 v (± 0.2 v). A digitizing oscilloscope is connected to the PZT elements 34, 36 via the suspension trace and a 10X oscilloscope probe. A rigid shim holds the part at flyheight. The shim is removed from the part and the suspension 30 is allowed to resonate in bending. If possible, the headlift feature on the part is used to elevate the part to flyheight. However, if no headlift exists

extreme care is taken to both elevate the part on the flexure 39 and to release the part by removing the shim from the flexure 39.

Figure 3b is an inverted and expanded scale graph of the electrical signals produced by a properly functioning and mounted microactuator motor (“no damage”) at waveform 52. Figure 3b also shows a waveform 64 for a motor having an adhesive fracture on one of its piezoelectric elements (“right motor adhesive fracture”). As shown, the peak level 62 of the signal produced by the properly functioning motor is relatively low compared to the peak level 66 of the motor having the failure mode.

Figure 4 shows the output waveforms 68, 70 for a suspension with a right and left motor fracture. A right motor fracture produces a positive peak voltage 72 indicating the right motor is generating less voltage than normal. Adhesive delamination of the of the right motor will produce a similar output waveform and peak voltage. The output waveform 70 for a left motor fracture produces a negative peak voltage 74 indicating the left motor is generating less voltage than normal. Note that the peak voltages for both a left and right motor fracture are outside the range of voltages observed for parts with no defects, which is -0.8 ± 0.2 v. Adhesive delamination of the left motor will produce a similar output waveform and peak voltage.

Figure 5 shows an output waveform 76 of a suspension that has a broken wire bond between the motors. An electrical connection remains between the trace and the right motor; hence, a resultant peak voltage 78 is similar to the result 58 shown in Figure 3c for the right motor.

Figure 6 shows an output waveform 80 when both motors are depoled. When PZT motors are depoled, they output a significantly lower voltage as the motors are flexed compared to PZT motors that are not depoled. Notice that the waveform 80 shows a significant reduction in peak voltage, which is easily detectable.

Figure 7 is a histogram 82 of good parts 84 and parts 86 with a cracked left motor which shows the separation/gap between the peak voltage of known good parts and the peak voltage of parts with a fractured left motor.

Testing has shown that the ringout method can reliably detect defects on this type of suspension. Figure 8a is a graph of a histogram illustrating the number (density) of occurrences and signal characteristics of microactuated suspension failure tests in accordance with the invention for properly functioning (“good”) suspensions (at 90) and suspensions having a number of different failure modes. The failure modes represented in Figure 8a include motors having broken wire bonds (at 92), having depoled piezoelectric elements (at 94) and having elements that are poled the same (at 96). As shown, the peak signal distributions for the properly functioning and specific failure mode motors are relatively tight and distinguishable from one another. In particular, the peak signal level of good motors is at least about 1 volt (e.g., from “depoled” motors), and up to at least about 7 volts (from “poled same” motors), different in magnitude than the levels produced by the motors having the various failure modes. The mean and standard deviation for each of the distributions shown in Figure 8a is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

DISTRIBUTION	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
90	1.05425	0.0605694
92	3.57375	0.468772
94	0.10655	0.0367325
96	-5.808	0.613837

Figure 8b is a key to Figures 8c-8e. Figure 8c shows a section view along line A-A of Figure 8b with a wire 98 for a normal part. Figure 8d shows a section view along line A-A of Figure 8b for motors poled the same, and Figure 8e shows a section view along line A-A of Figure 8b for motors with a broken wire bond.

Figure 9 is a graph of a histogram illustrating the number (density) of occurrences and signal characteristics of microactuated suspension failure tests in accordance with the invention for properly functioning (“good”) suspensions and suspensions having motors with fractures in one of either the left or right piezoelectric elements. Distribution 102 is for good

parts, distribution 104 is for parts with an adhesive fracture at the left motor, and distribution 106 is for parts with an adhesive fracture at the right motor. The mean and standard deviation for each of these distributions is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

DISTRIBUTION	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
102	1.05425	0.0605694
104	2.762	0.365921
106	-2.562	0.473926

Referring now to Figure 10, the separation between known good parts 108 and those with additional defects that the ringout method can detect may be seen. It is to be understood that the data for Figure 10 has a sign change because the data for Figure 10 was taken from a suspension intended for operation on the opposite side of a rotating magnetic disk. Furthermore, magnitude of the data for Figure 10 differs from the data in Figures 8a and 9 because the data for Figure 10 was taken from a different model of suspension than that tested for Figures 8a and 9. Nevertheless, it can be seen that discrete, identifiable defects include “same pole” 110, depoled parts 112, broken wire bonds 114, right motor adhesive failure 116 and left motor adhesive failure 118.

Figure 11 is a graph 120 illustrating the signal levels from a series of tested components which are properly functioning (“good parts”), or have fractures in either the left or right piezoelectric element of the motor. Good parts are indicated by a square 122, left motor fracture parts by a diamond 124, and right motor fracture parts by a triangle 126.

Figure 12 is a graph 128 illustrating the signal levels from a series of tested components which are properly functioning (“good parts” indicated by a square 130), or have fractures in both piezoelectric elements of the motor (indicated by a diamond 132).

Figure 13 is a graph 134 illustrating the signal levels from a properly functioning suspension motor (at 136) and a suspension motor having failure modes in both its piezoelectric elements (at 138). As shown, in addition to the signal levels, the shape

characteristics of the signal from the damaged motor (i.e., asymmetric, not a sine wave) are also sufficiently different than the shape characteristics of the signal from the properly functioning motor to enable detection of the failure mode by a comparison of the signals (e.g., electronically or visually). As indicated by circle 140, the waveform 138 can show a bad part even if the peak voltage does not. It is to be noted that with respect to waveform 136 for a good part, the oscilloscope trigger was set at level 142. Waveform 136 displays noise 144 until the part is released at 146.

Microcracks

Turning to another type of failure, at this time, parts with micro cracks are not detectable using the ringout method alone. However, a method has been found to detect micro cracks by subjecting the motors to a high voltage electrical signal at a resonant frequency of the suspension (sway mode). The part must be rigidly held at the base plate with the suspension in an unloaded state. The vibration (actuation) created by this procedure causes the crack to propagate into a large fracture which is easily detectable. Investigation will determine effects of applying a high voltage sweep on PZT elements and the suspension assembly.

Tests have demonstrated that hairline and microcracks (i.e., very fine cracks) in the piezoelectric actuators can produce electrical signal characteristics which fall within the normal distribution of properly functioning motors. Cracks of these types typically extend through the gold layer, but are not visible under low magnification (e.g., 10x) unless the load beam is flexed. Microcracks located under the gold layer are generally not visible under any magnification, even if the load beam is flexed. However, very fine cracks of these types can be propagated into larger cracks which can be more accurately detected by the invention by applying a relatively large sweep frequency sine wave signal to the motor for a relatively short time period. The frequency range of the signal sweep preferably extends through at least one of the resonant frequencies of the suspension. As the suspension resonates, the very fine cracks will increase in size and propagate through the gold coating layer on the piezoelectric element. Arcing also occurs along the crack on the gold surface, thereby

making the crack visible under low magnification. By way of example, tests of the invention have been performed by applying a 90 volt peak, 7KHz – 9KHz sweep frequency sine wave of 750 msec duration. Although this signal is larger than the typical PZT motor operating voltage, it does not damage the PZT motor or the suspension (other than propagating existing cracks).

Following the application of this excitation signal, the suspension motor can be tested using the method described above. Figure 14 is a photograph of the piezoelectric elements of a suspension microactuator motor having a microcrack (not visible) before application of a sweep frequency signal in accordance with the method described above. Figure 15 is a photograph of the motor shown in Figure 14 after application of the crack-expanding sweep frequency signal, with the microcrack now visible through the gold surface of the motor.

Summary

The ringout test method can detect many types of structural damage to the PZT motors, such as a broken wire bond, delaminated adhesive bond, depoled motors, and some types of fractured motors. While micro cracks are not detectable by this method alone, there is a method to use in conjunction with ringout that has the ability to detect micro cracks. Table 3 lists the defects and change in peak voltage from a known good part, illustrating the significance of the methods of the present invention.

Table 3

Defect	Characteristics
Right motor - micro crack	No change
Left motor - micro crack	No change
Right motor - hairline fracture	30 % to 450 % change
Left motor - hairline fracture	60 % to 250 % change
Right motor - large fracture	150 % to 500 % change
Left motor - large fracture	60 % to 400 % change
Right motor - adhesive delamination	350 % to 600 % change
Left motor – adhesive	200 % to 400 % change
Broken wire bond	300 % to 800 % change
Both motors depoled	80 % to 130 % change